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DOCTOR WHO #4

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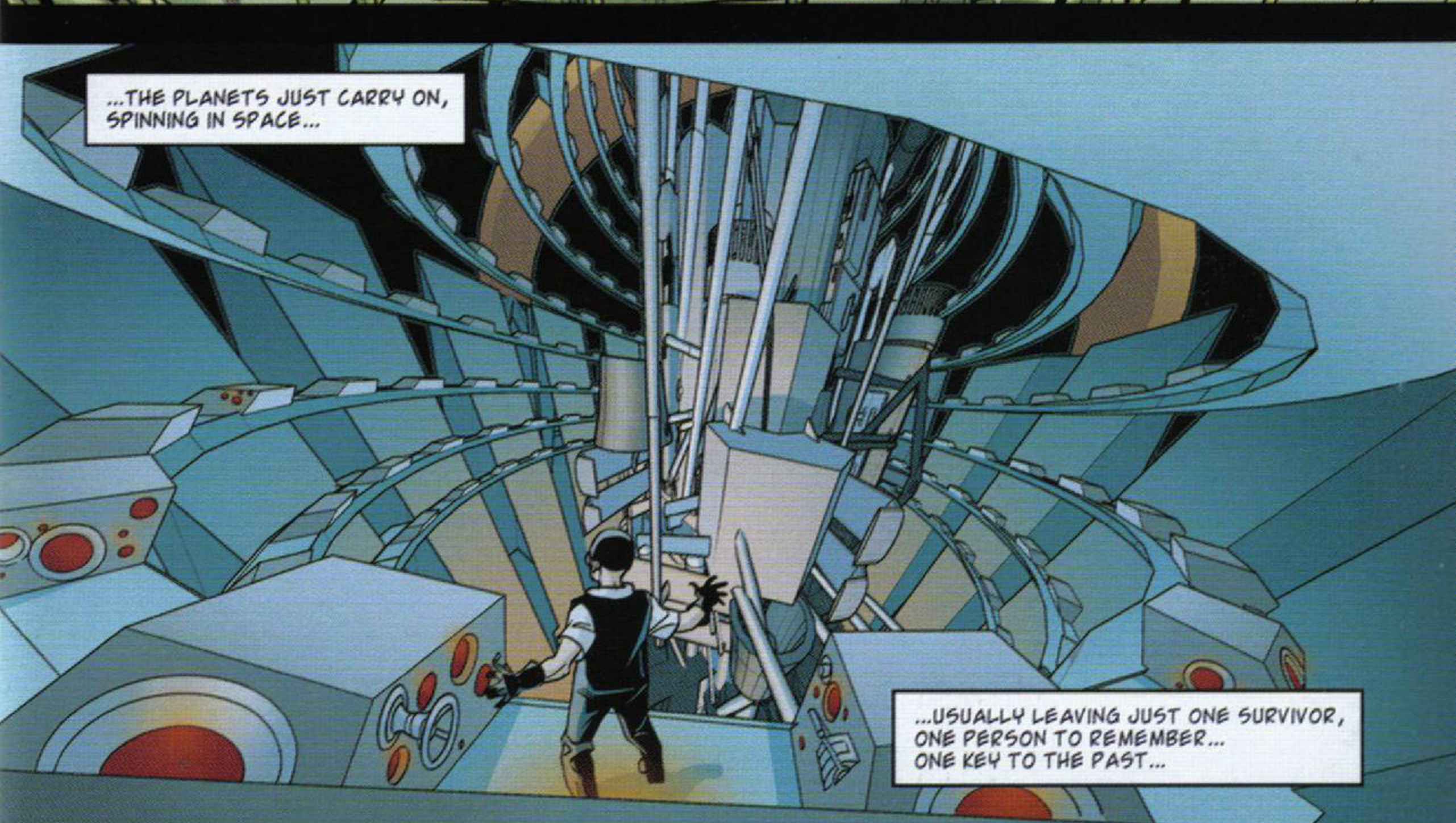
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ACROSS THE UNIVERSE, STRANGE
THINGS HAVE BEEN HAPPENING...

...ENTIRE CIVILIZATIONS HAVE
BEEN VANISHING INEXPLICABLY...



...THE PLANETS JUST CARRY ON,
SPINNING IN SPACE...

...USUALLY LEAVING JUST ONE SURVIVOR,
ONE PERSON TO REMEMBER...
ONE KEY TO THE PAST...



...THERE SEEMS TO BE NO PATTERN
TO THIS, NO RHYME NOR REASON...

...BUT OF COURSE THERE IS. IT
JUST NEEDS SOMEONE TO COME
ALONG AND WORK IT ALL OUT.

WONDER WHO THAT MIGHT BE...

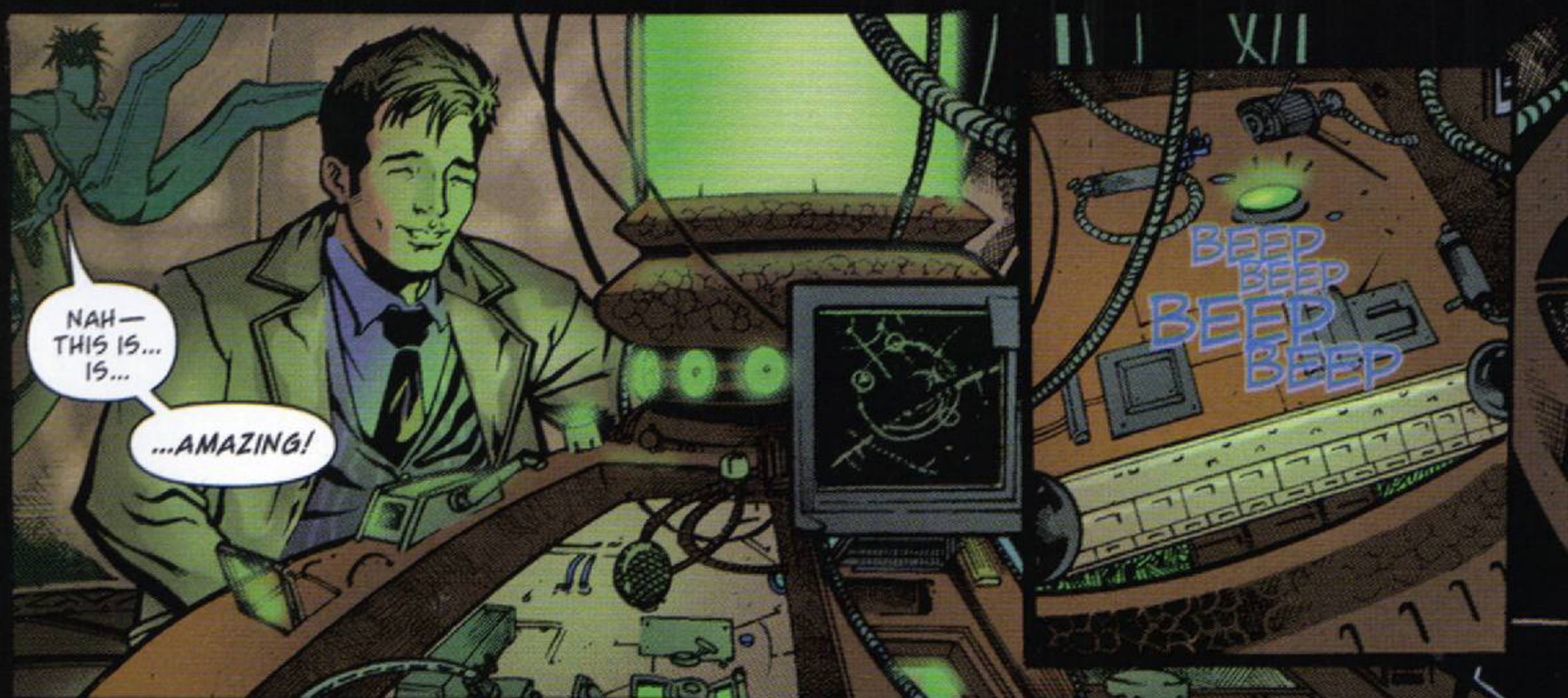


A comic book panel set in a futuristic laboratory. In the foreground, a man with dark hair, wearing a grey suit, white shirt, and dark tie, is smiling and gesturing with his right arm towards a woman. In the background, the woman, with her hair in a bun and wearing a red shirt and blue pants, is leaning over a glowing green cylindrical device. The room has a metallic floor with circular patterns and various cables and pipes hanging from the ceiling.

...I'M GONNA
HUG YOU TO
DEATH TO SAY
THANK YOU FOR
THIS!

WOO-HOOOOO!!

YOU... LOOK...
BRILLIANT UP...
THERE. WANNA
COME... DOWN
YET?





OH, OF COURSE!



I'VE GOTCHA!
I'VE GOTCHA!
I'VE —



ACTUALLY,
I'VE NOT
GOTCHA...



YOU
ARE, CRAP,
SOMETIMES.

OH, COME
ON, YOU LOVE
IT!



YEAH, ALL
RIGHT, I DO. BUT
ONE DAY, I'M GONNA
FORGET THAT AND
THUMP SOME SENSE
INTO YOU.

YEAH,
YEAH. WE'RE
LANDING.

WWRP
WWRPPP



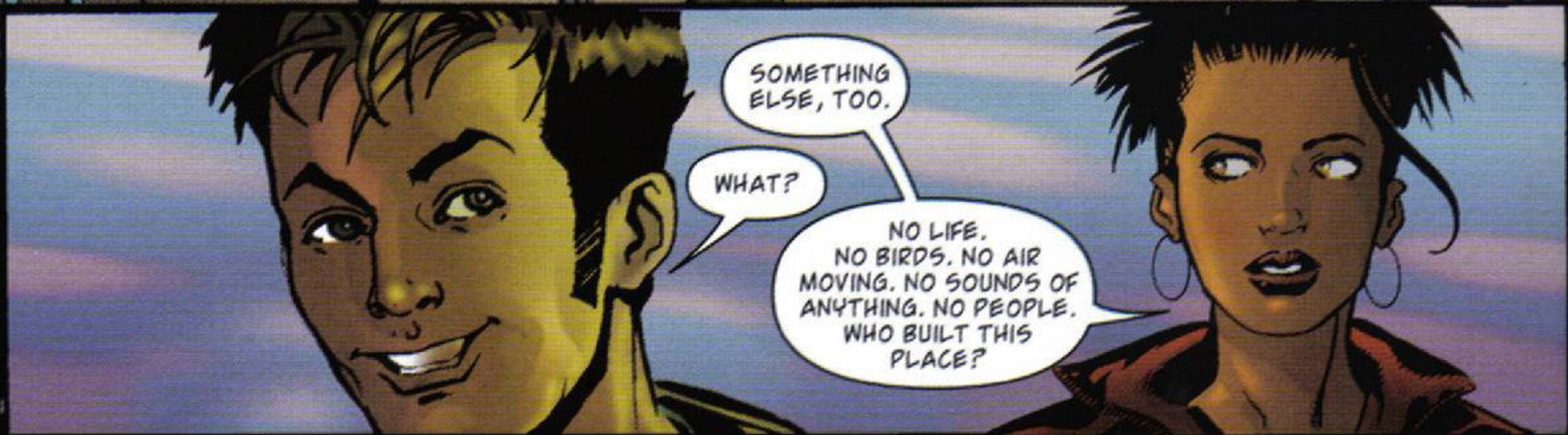
EXCELLENT.
WHERE? BETTER BE
SOMEWHERE NICE THIS
TIME. NO DEATH STALKING
US, NO ANIMALS INVADING,
NO BLOBBY MONSTERS
RIPPING THE CORE
OUT OF PLANETS,
NO —





WOW. I MEAN,
WOW. I'VE SEEN
SOME MARVELOUS
MECHANICAL PLANETS,
BUT THIS IS...
BEAUTIFUL.

IT'S VERY...
SILVERY.



SOMETHING
ELSE, TOO.

WHAT?

NO LIFE.
NO BIRDS. NO AIR
MOVING. NO SOUNDS OF
ANYTHING. NO PEOPLE.
WHO BUILT THIS
PLACE?



PERHAPS THE
ROBOTS DOWN
THERE DID.

HELLOOOOOOOO!

UMMM... WAS
THAT A GOOD
IDEA?

'COURSE IT WAS.
WHY WOULDN'T IT BE A
GOOD IDEA? I PRESUME
THEY DREW THE TARDIS
HERE FOR A REASON.
HELLOOOOO....





SHOULD'VE
STAYED IN THE
TARDIS...

YOU
THINK?



ELEVATOR!

LIFT!



"LIFT?"
REALLY, LINGUISTIC
SEMANTICS? RIGHT
HERE AND NOW?

YEAH,
RIGHT, SORRY—
AUTOMATIC REACTION.
AND HERE'S
ANOTHER...



...HIT "UP." OR
FLOOR 501. OR
PENTHOUSE. OR
SOMETHING!

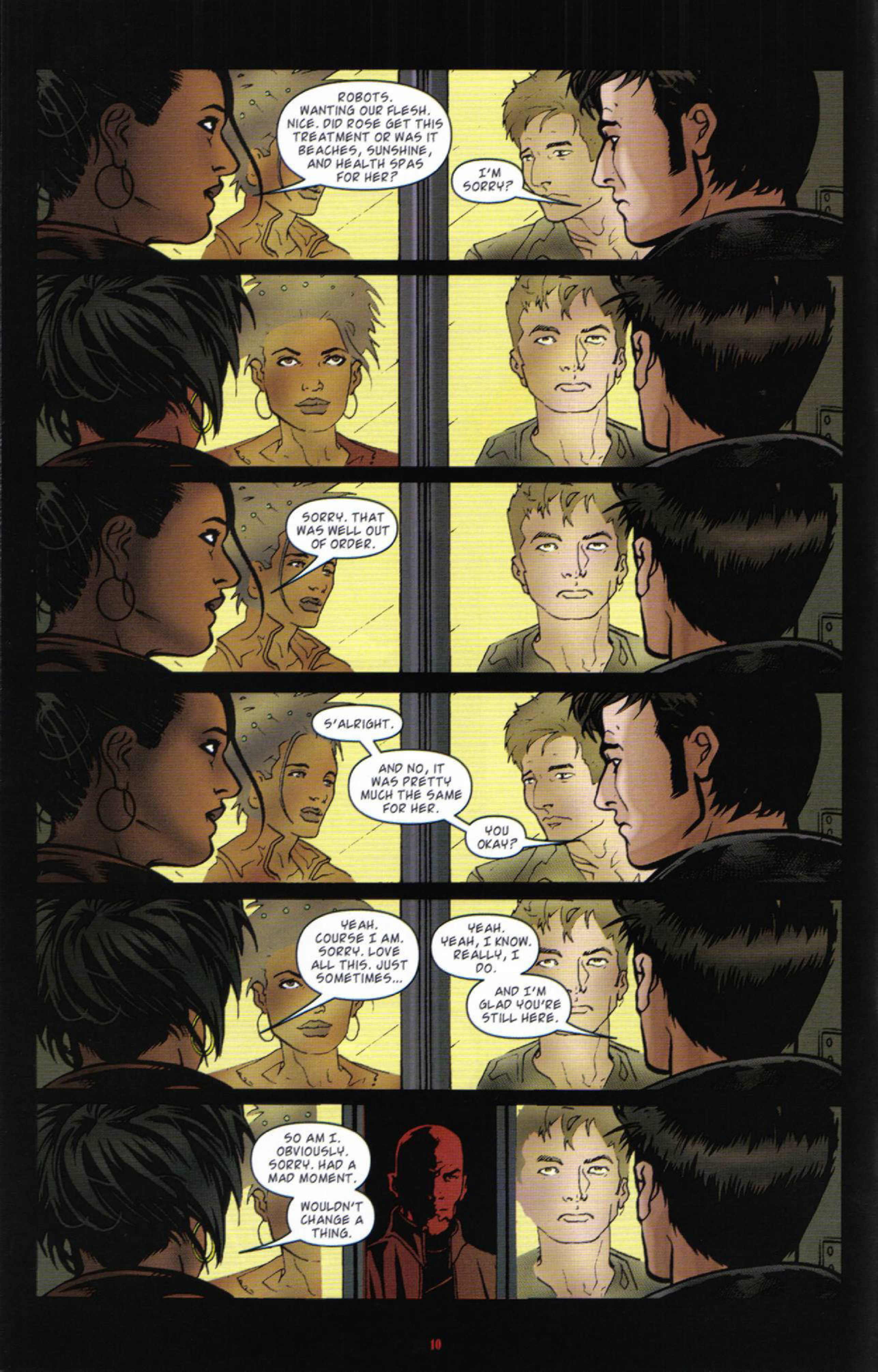


WAS
THAT SHOVE
NECESSARY?

YES. OTHERWISE
WE'D'VE BEEN
STOOD OUT THERE
ARGUING FOR HOURS.
WOULDN'T WE.

PROBABLY,
YEAH.

FLESSSHHHH...



ROBOTS.
WANTING OUR FLESH.
NICE. DID ROSE GET THIS
TREATMENT OR WAS IT
BEACHES, SUNSHINE,
AND HEALTH SPAS
FOR HER?

I'M
SORRY?

SORRY. THAT
WAS WELL OUT
OF ORDER.

S'ALRIGHT.

AND NO, IT
WAS PRETTY
MUCH THE SAME
FOR HER.

YOU
OKAY?

YEAH.
COURSE I AM.
SORRY. LOVE
ALL THIS. JUST
SOMETIMES...

YEAH.
YEAH, I KNOW.
REALLY, I
DO.

AND I'M
GLAD YOU'RE
STILL HERE.

SO AM I.
OBVIOUSLY.
SORRY. HAD A
MAD MOMENT.

WOULDN'T
CHANGE A
THING.



HELLO STRANGERS! ARE YOU SURVIVORS, TOO?

SURVIVORS?

OF THE GALACTIC HOLOCAUST? WORLDS RAVAGED, POPULATIONS DECIMATED, ENERGY LOST...? YOU... DON'T KNOW?

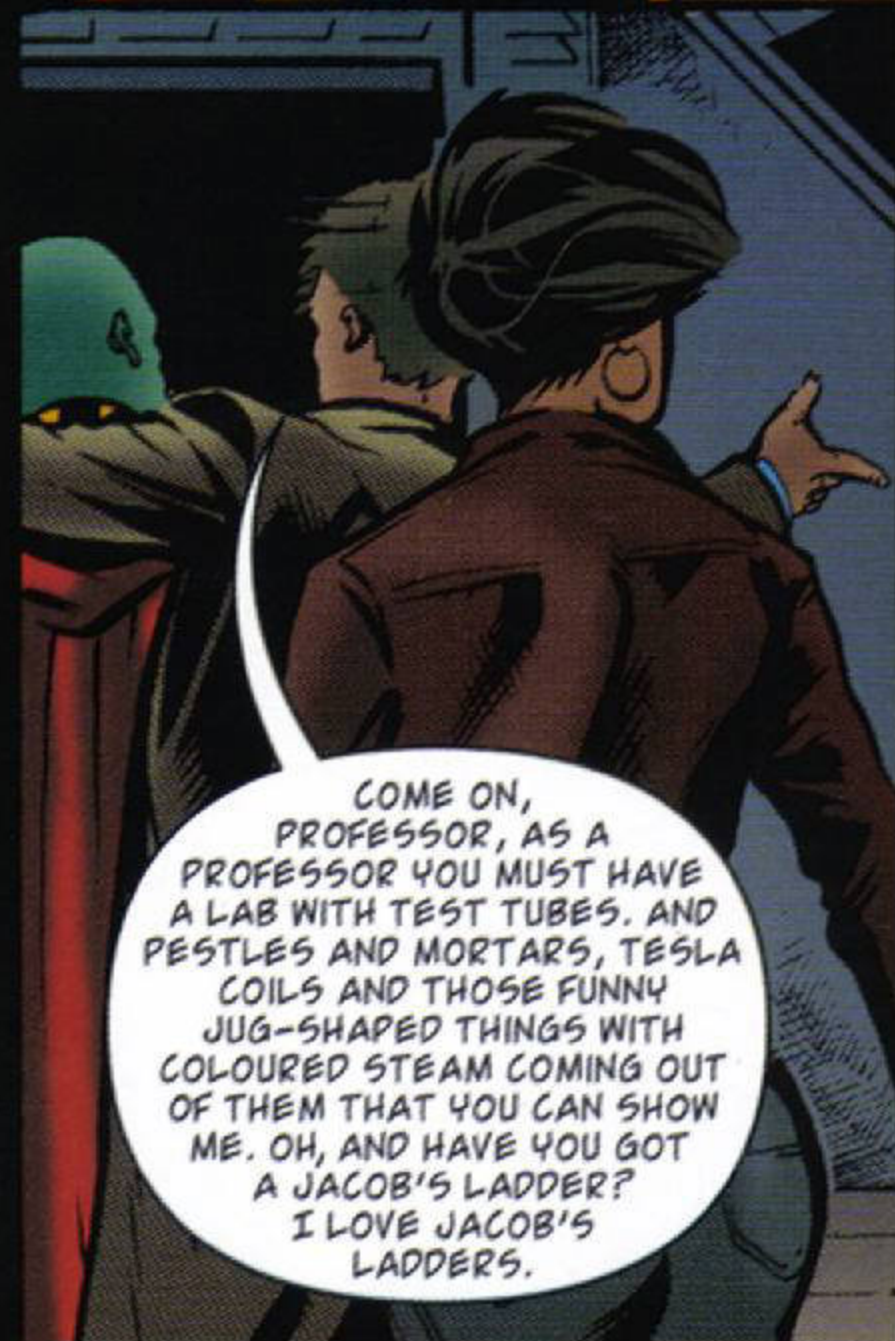


I'M THE DOCTOR; THIS IS MARTHA. AND NO, I'M TERRIBLY SORRY BUT WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT.

WE WERE BEING CHASED BY ROBOTS...

...SOMEHOW THAT SOUNDED SCARIER IN MY HEAD.

PROFESSOR THARLOT. I FEAR I AM THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF OMPHALOS.



COME ON, PROFESSOR, AS A PROFESSOR YOU MUST HAVE A LAB WITH TEST TUBES. AND PESTLES AND MORTARS, TESLA COILS AND THOSE FUNNY JUG-SHAPED THINGS WITH COLOURED STEAM COMING OUT OF THEM THAT YOU CAN SHOW ME. OH, AND HAVE YOU GOT A JACOB'S LADDER? I LOVE JACOB'S LADDERS.



OKAY, WHAT DID YOU WANT ME TO FIND, DOCTOR?



OH, OH, THAT'S ODD. NOT SURE THAT SHOULD BE THERE AT ALL. WELL SPOTTED, DOCTOR...



UMMM... HELLO, EVERYONE. I'M SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.

DOCTOR, MEET THE SURVIVORS OF TEN OTHER WORLDS WHICH HAVE SUFFERED THE SAME FATE AS THIS ONE. THE ENTIRE ORGANIC POPULATION— JUST VANISHED IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE. LEAVING JUST ONE KNOWN SURVIVOR.



WHO ARE YOU? ARE YOU HELPING THE PROFESSOR FIND OUR MISSING PEOPLE?

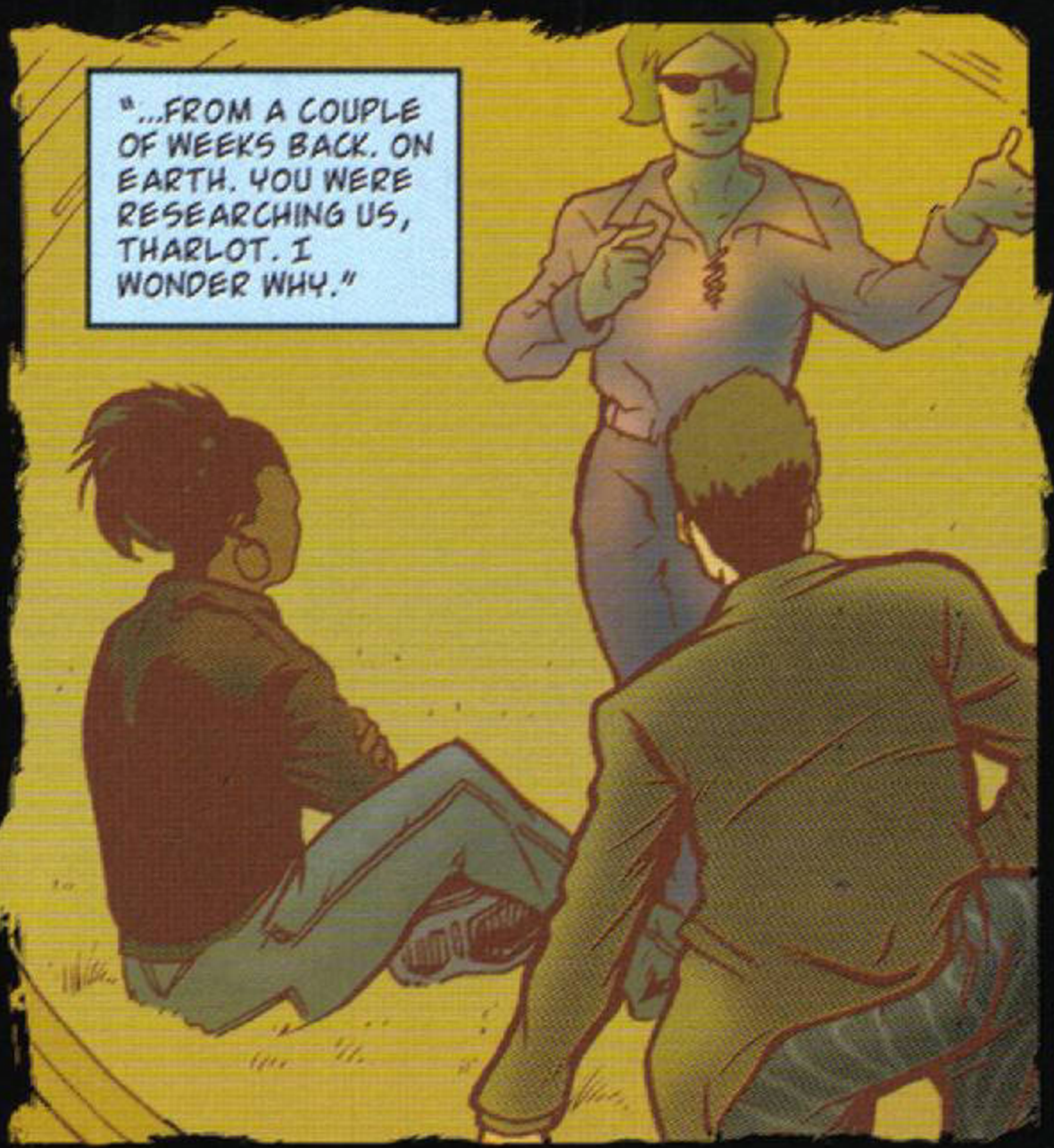
BUT THEN I'M NOT AT ALL SURE YOU GUYS SHOULD TRUST THE PROFESSOR HERE AS MUCH AS YOU DO.

I AM AFFRONTED THAT YOU WOULD SAY SUCH A THING, DOCTOR.

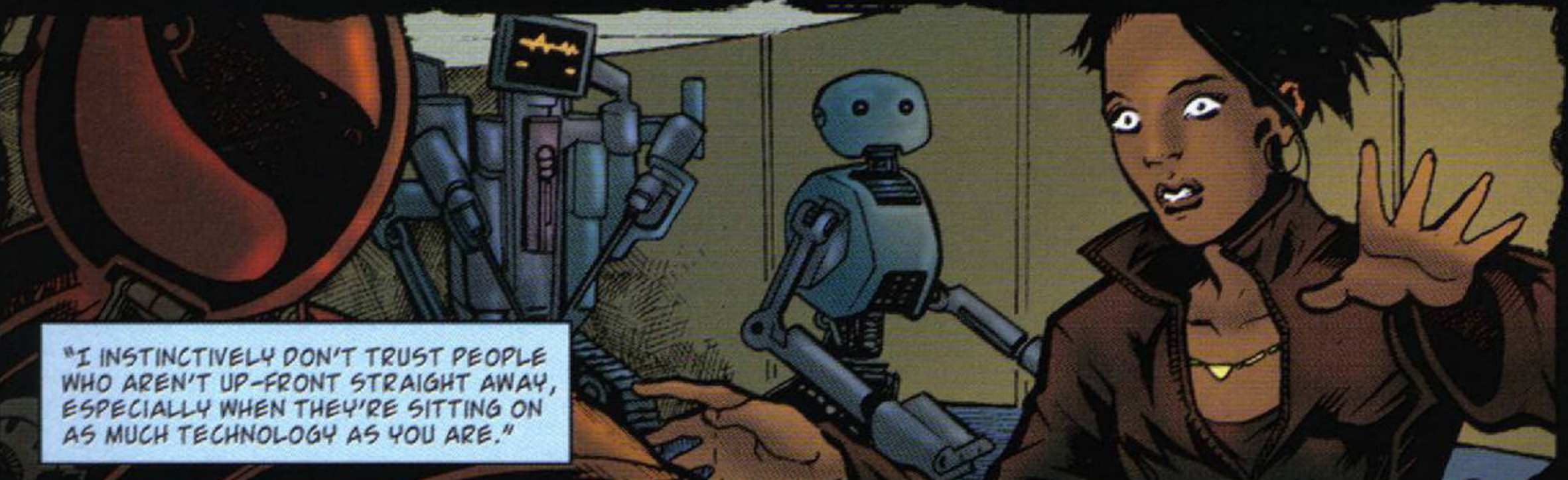
OH, DON'T PLAY THE HARMLESS OLD MAN WITH ME, THARLOT. YOU LEFT YOUR COMMUNICATOR ON NEXT DOOR. AND I ASKED MARTHA...



"...IF SHE COULD WORK OUT WHY YOU HAD IMAGES OF MY TARDIS AND SHE AND I..."



"...FROM A COUPLE OF WEEKS BACK. ON EARTH. YOU WERE RESEARCHING US, THARLOT. I WONDER WHY."



"I INSTINCTIVELY DON'T TRUST PEOPLE WHO AREN'T UP-FRONT STRAIGHT AWAY, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE SITTING ON AS MUCH TECHNOLOGY AS YOU ARE."



HOW STUPID DO YOU THINK WE ARE? THOSE ROBOTS COULDN'T HAVE BUILT THIS CIVILIZATION, OPERATED THESE DELICATE SCREENS, OR YOUR PDA—NOT WITH THOSE RETRO-HANDS. SO YOU, ONE SOLITARY HUMAN LEFT IN THIS CITY, SPYING ON MARTHA AND ME?

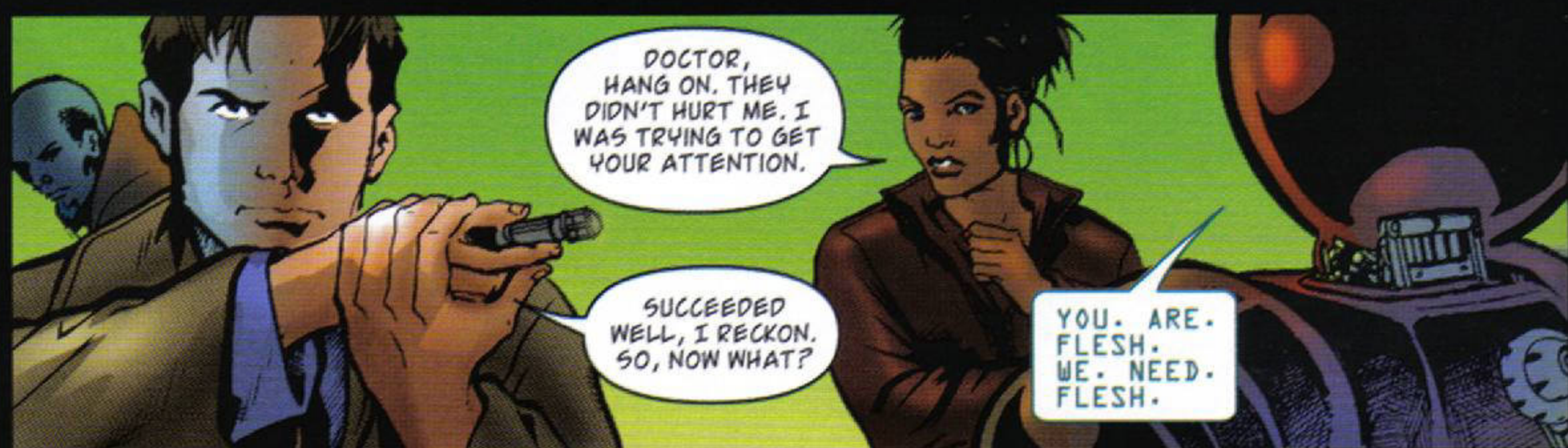
click

THEY SAID YOU WERE GOOD, DOCTOR. BUT HOW GOOD, I WONDER...



DOCTOOOORRR!

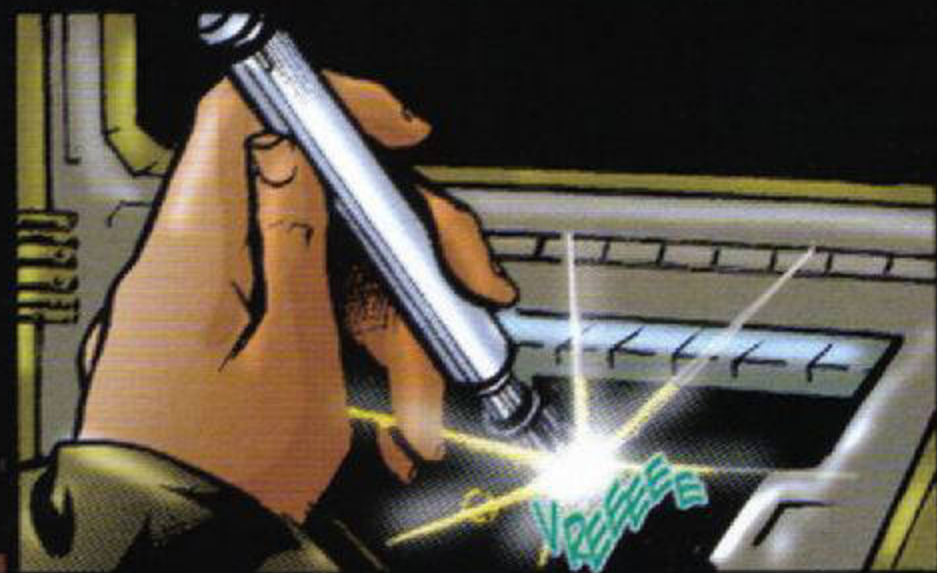
FLESSSHHH...



THINK, DOCTOR. WHY THOSE PLANETS? QUITE A FEW DIFFERENT SYSTEMS HERE, ONE PLANET FROM EACH, ALIGNED... HOW?

I DUNNO MUCH ABOUT ASTRONOMY, BUT I'D HAVE THOUGHT THAT ALL THOSE PLANETS LINED UP LIKE THAT, IN STRAIGHT LINE, CAN'T HAPPEN TOO OFTEN.

SPOT ON. MARTHA, WE NEED AN UPGRADE.



OH, GREAT, YOU TURNED THE LIGHTS OFF.

FLESH. LIGHT. GONE. WHY?

HAVE FAITH, MARTHA.

PREPARE TO BE IMPRESSED, YOU LOT.

WOW. OKAY, COLOUR ME IMPRESSED.

NOW WE CAN GET A BETTER IDEA OF WHATEVER THARLOT HAS BEEN UP TO.

NOPE. STUMPED. UTTERLY. BUT YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THE ALIGNMENT BEING EXCEPTIONALLY RARE, MARTHA. WHICH I WOULD HAZARD A GUESS MEANS THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.



HANG ON.
YOUR PLANETARY
POPULATION
VANISHED, RIGHT,
LIKE EVERYONE
ELSE'S?

CORRECT.

TEN PLANETS
ALIGNED, TEN
HEADS ON SCREENS.
AND THARLOT. WHICH
MEANS 11 PLANETS.
SO EITHER ONE MORE
WORLD IS DUE TO GO
THROUGH MASSIVE
REDEPLOYMENT OF
ITS PEOPLE,
OR...

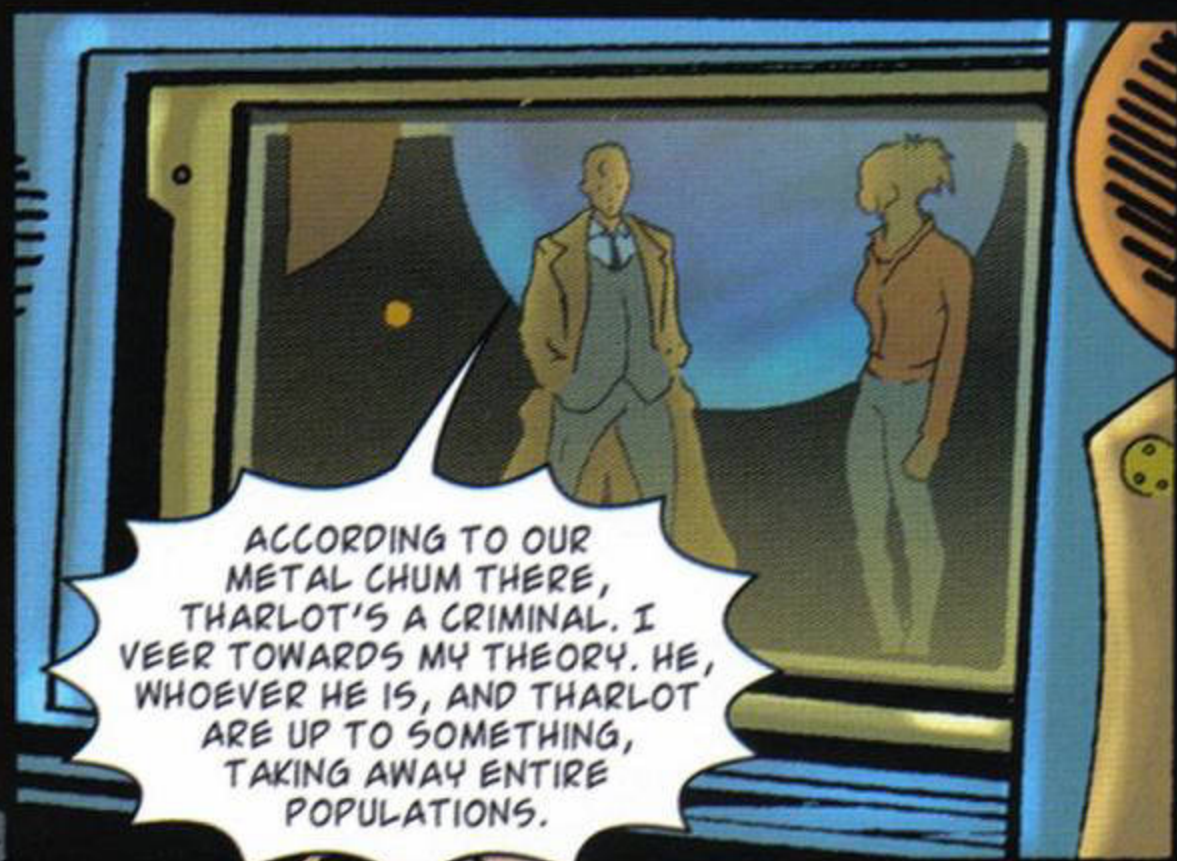


OR THARLOT
CAN'T COUNT.

YEAH, I KINDA
DISCOUNTED THAT
THEORY, BUT
WORTH MENTIONING
ANYWAY. THANK
YOU.

SO—ONE OF
THOSE FACES I SAW
WASN'T FROM A
PLANETARY VICTIM, BUT
WAS IN LEAGUE WITH
THARLOT.

OR IS THE
MASTERMIND, AND
THARLOT'S THE
FALLGUY.



ACCORDING TO OUR
METAL CHUM THERE,
THARLOT'S A CRIMINAL. I
VEER TOWARDS MY THEORY. HE,
WHOEVER HE IS, AND THARLOT
ARE UP TO SOMETHING,
TAKING AWAY ENTIRE
POPULATIONS.



WELL,
I WAS RIGHT,
WASN'T I?
BRIGHT BOY.

MR. WAIN, YOU
KNOW YOU ARE
ALWAYS RIGHT.
WHAT NOW? IF HE
GUESSES THE
PLAN...

HE
WON'T. NOT
YET ANYWAY.
YOU HAVE HIS
SHIP?



"TAKEN CARE
OF, MR. WAIN."



SO, TELL
US ABOUT
THARLOT.

HE. WAS IMPRISONED.
TWELVE. CYCLES. AGO.

WHY?

FLESH. PEOPLE.
KILLED. BY. HIM.
HE. LOCKED. AWAY.
FOR. LIFE.

WHEN. FLESH. PEOPLE. VANISHED.
HE. WAS. UNSUPERVISED. WE. TRIED.
TO. RECAPTURE. HIM. HE. EVADED.
US. FLED. TO. THIS. TOWER. WE.
WERE. UNAWARE. OF. WHERE. HE.
WAS. UNTIL. YOU. LED. US. HERE.



YOU THINK HE
HAD SOMETHING TO
DO WITH THE FLESH...
THE PEOPLE
VANISHING?



HE. IS. A.
CRIMINAL.



CRUDE MACHINE
LOGIC. HE WAS A
CRIMINAL, THEREFORE
EVERY CRIME MUST BE
HIS IF NO ONE ELSE
IS PRESENT.







WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? DID YOU MURDER THE ROBOTS?

HOW CAN YOU MURDER MACHINES?



YOU'RE UNDERTAKING A JOB FOR ME, MARTHA JONES.



MARTHA! GET BACK FROM THAT THING ON THE FLOOR!



TOO LATE, DOCTOR. YOU'RE ABOUT TO DISCOVER MY SPACE-TIME PORTAL. I HAVE SPENT A LIFETIME BUILDING THIS PLACE, CREATING A TINY POCKET DIMENSION TO KEEP IT ALL SAFELY IN.



FIND THE LEASH, DOCTOR, AND MY DEVICE WILL BRING YOU BACK HERE. TO YOUR SHIP.



"FAIL ME, AND YOU'LL NEVER SEE YOUR TARDIS AGAIN..."



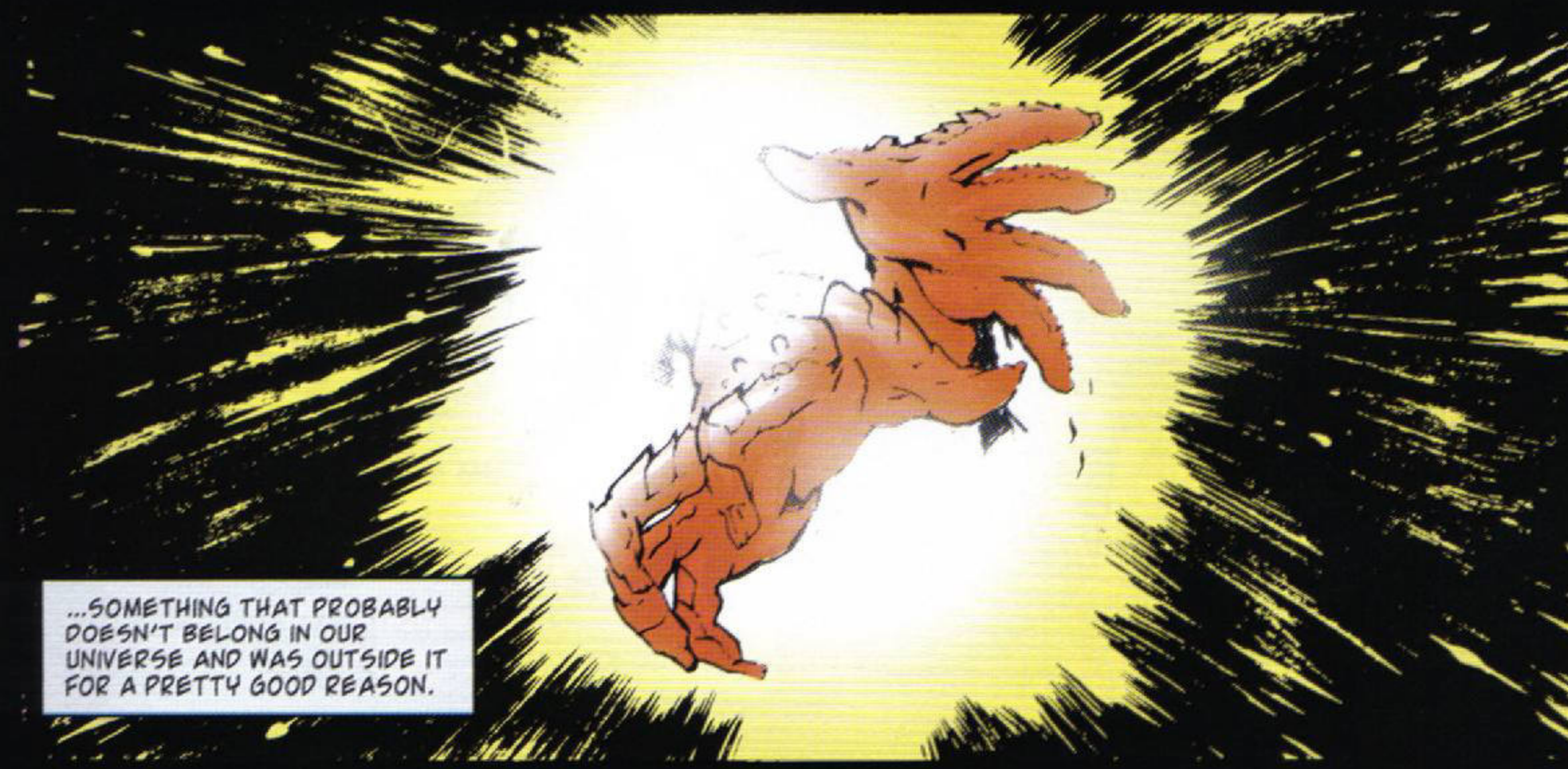
MEANWHILE...



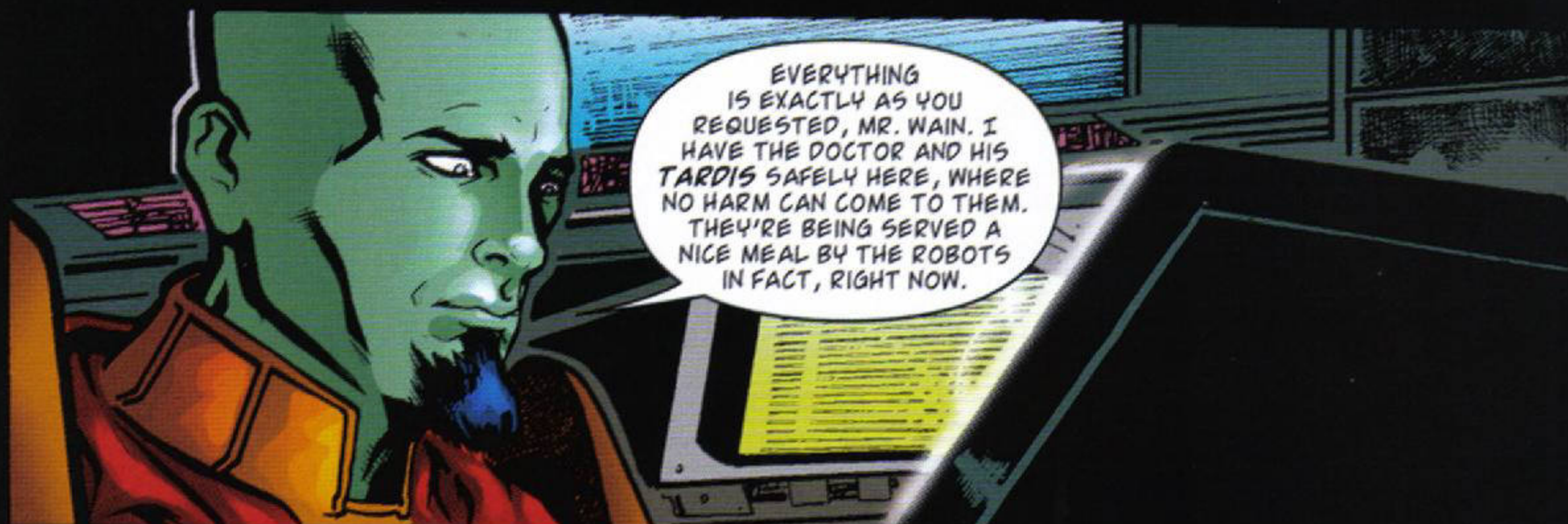
THERE IS INDEED A REASON FOR THE ALIGNMENT OF TEN PLANETS IN A STRAIGHT LINE. THE GRAVITATIONAL PULL OF THEM IS AFFECTING SPACE, CREATING A REND...



...A REND THAT SOMETHING IS USING...



...SOMETHING THAT PROBABLY DOESN'T BELONG IN OUR UNIVERSE AND WAS OUTSIDE IT FOR A PRETTY GOOD REASON.





"DON'T WORRY, THE DOCTOR IS IN PERFECTLY SAFE HANDS. THARLOT WOULDN'T BETRAY US."

TO BE CONTINUED.

NEXT MONTH IN:
ISSUE #5





JOHN BYRNE'S LATEST ASSIGNMENT ARRIVES IN MAY!

The esteemed creator launches his first-ever *Star Trek* miniseries

Among the few living and working comic book creators who really do need no introduction, **John Byrne** is an individual near the top of that very short list. And yet, despite decades of phenomenal success that has seen him help revive characters from the X-Men to Superman, as well as debut runs on his own wildly successful creations like *John Byrne's Next Men*, the lifelong *Star Trek* fan has never actually put pen to a *Star Trek* comic book until coming to IDW.

After getting a warm-up with the *Alien Spotlight: Romulans* book released in February, Byrne has opened up the afterburners for his first-ever full-fledged *Star Trek* series, *Star Trek: Assignment Earth*. Part of IDW's *Star Trek: Second Stage* line of titles that feature major storytelling talent for its second year of publishing Starfleet stories, the book takes the "back-door" pilot seen as the season two finale of The Original Series and, 40 years later, gives life to the spin-off that never came to pass. Byrne took a break from his drawing table to talk to IDW about his new *Star Trek* work, reviving his older *Next Men* comics, and the joys of watching young Teri Garr.



Angel: After the Fall #6
Badger Saves the World #5
Doctor Who #4
Doctor Who Classics #5
Everybody's Dead #2
Fallen Angel #26
FX #2
Gene Simmons Zipper #6
Ghost Whisperer: The Haunted #2
Locke & Key #3
The Executioner: The Devil's Tools #1
The Mummy Movie Prequel: The Rise and Fall of Xango's Ax #1
Rogue Angel: Teller of Tall Tales #3
Silent Hill: Sinner's Reward #3
Speed Racer: Chronicles of the Racer #4
Star Trek: The Next Generation: Intelligence Gathering #4
Star Trek: New Frontier #2
Star Trek: Year Four: The Enterprise Experiment #1
The Transformers: Best of the UK: Dinobots #6
The Transformers: Best of the UK: Space Pirates #2
Transformers Movie Sequel: The Reign of Starscream #1

Complete Chester Gould's Dick Tracy, Vol. 4
CVO: African Blood TPB
Gene Simmons Dominatrix TPB
Gene Simmons House of Horrors TPB
Speed Racer: Chronicles of the Racer TPB
Speed Racer/Racer X: The Origins Collection TPB

APRIL RELEASES FROM IDW PUBLISHING



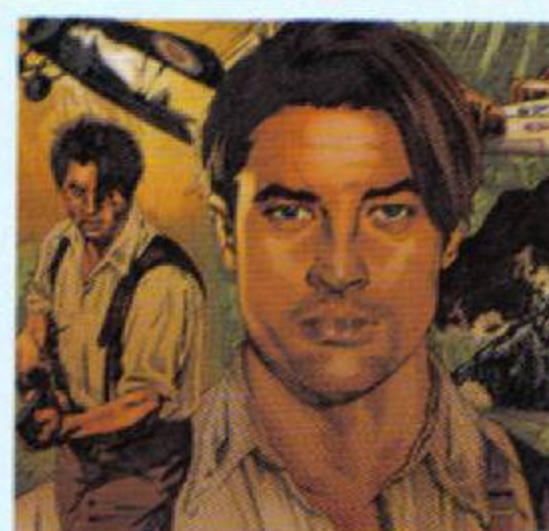
The Executioner: The Devil's Tools #1



Star Trek: Year Four: The Enterprise Experiment #1



Angel: After the Fall #6



The Mummy Movie Prequel: The Rise and Fall of Xango's Ax #1



Transformers Movie Sequel: The Reign of Starscream #1

Comments, questions, suggestions, complaints, gripes, etc. are appreciated. Feel free to send any correspondence to letters@idwpublishing.com or IDW Words, 5080 Santa Fe Street, San Diego, CA 92109. You can also join in the hullabaloo on our message boards at idwpublishing.com.

IDW: Decades into the comics biz, and this is the first time you've sharpened your pencil for a full-fledged *Star Trek* series. How did that come about?

JB: The most prosaic way possible—I was asked! IDW Editor-in-Chief Chris Ryall had contacted me about the *Next Men* reprints, and threw out the idea of my doing some *Star Trek* stuff. I protested that my likenesses were not up to the task, but he is a persistent little bugger (name that quote!) and suggested maybe one of the Alien Spotlight books, where likenesses would not be an issue. Thus, *Romulans*. Then Chris asked if there was anything else I'd be interested in doing in that vein, and I asked about Gary Seven.

IDW: That's a pretty obscure character. What about him caught your attention? It was that awesome ballpoint pen, right?

JB: That, and Teri Garr! No, seriously, when I first saw the episode, at the end of the second season of *The Original Series*, I was still naive enough not to recognize it as a pilot. I saw it in much the same light as Harry Mudd—a character/situation being introduced that would turn up again in future episodes. When no such episodes were forthcoming, I thought about doing some of my own, though I didn't really consider ever actually having a place to put 'em!

IDW: Still, it's an incredibly original idea to do a comics version of the Gary Seven TV spin-off that never came to pass. Skipping a year forward with each issue will also be unconventional. In fact, it's probably the most unusual *Star Trek* title ever published. Was that what you set out to do—"go where no miniseries has gone before"?

JB: The year skips are a minor element, really. I've said elsewhere that unless the reader is really hip to the history of the period, they will most likely not get any sense of how much time is passing. Mostly I'm doing it because I want to start close to the original episode, which was 1968, but one of the stories I came up with involves Nixon's visit to China, which was 1972. But, really, to a casual reader, I'll bet if I said there was no more than a month between issues there would be nothing—aside from Roberta's hair, which will be different in every issue—to clue them in to anything otherwise.

IDW: With the stories set in the 1960s and '70s, how will you keep it connected to *Trek*, so that fans will see that it's different, yet still familiar?

JB: Well, there's a big honkin' *Star Trek* in the logo, for a start! Also, the second issue "crosses over" with an actual episode of *The Original Series*. I'd thought about doing this in the third issue, but the Trekkie inside me couldn't wait.

IDW: Aha, a Trekkie, not a Trekker. That's a sure sign of an old-school fan. If you've been such a fan since you were a kid, why did it take you so long to decide to do a series?

JB: Mostly, the likenesses issue. Much as I love *Star Trek*, I did not want to face the nightmare of licensed projects again. Having actors sign off on their images is always a pain. Their mirrors don't work the same way that cameras do!



IDW: There are very few people who have drawn both *Star Trek* and the *X-Men* without having actually drawn "*Star Trek/X-Men*". There's you, Dave Cockrum, and I think Jim Lee did a *Voyager* cover once. That leaves you uniquely qualified to talk about *Trek* crossovers. If you could do a *Star Trek* crossover however you'd like, with any other fictional source, what would it be?

JB: This is nothing major, but since I started working on *Assignment Earth*, I have found myself thinking a crossover with Roddenberry's other, similarly themed busted pilot, *The Questor Tapes*, would be fun.

IDW: Let's talk about a few of your other projects. Your series *FX* with Wayne Osborne (also published by IDW) is gloriously retro, a superhero book that feels like it's straight out of the late 1970s or early '80s. Is that one of your favorite eras in comics?

JB: No, my favorite is a bit earlier! But it's definitely Wayne's. I think it's a disservice to call the book "retro," though. It's definitely not grim and gritty—or "gloomy," as Dave Gibbons has pointed out the "grim and gritty" books really are. It's old-time superheroics, much in the vein of Stan and Jack's *Fantastic Four*, or Stan and Steve's *Spider-Man*, but it has its own set of modern sensibilities, too. There'll be no doubt reading it that this is a book set in the 21st century, intended for a 21st century audience.

IDW: IDW is also going to reprint your entire *Next Men* run, along with *2112*, *Babe and Danger*, *Unlimited*. Is there the possibility of a new *Next Men* series on the horizon? This is just a courtesy question, mind you, since I have already decided for you that your answer will be "yes."

JB: If it looks like *Next Men* can be done as something other than a vanity project, I will certainly do it. The series has a definite ending—I even know the last line!—and I would very much like to shake those 20 or so issues out of my head some day!

IDW: Any possibility of another *Star Trek* miniseries after *Assignment Earth*? A more traditional Kirk-era story, or something set in *The Next Generation*?

JB: Doing *Romulans* and *Assignment Earth* has opened a door in my head that has been closed—or at least pushed to close—for a long time. All kinds of stuff seems to be trying to spill out. If *Assignment Earth* goes over well, I'd like to do more of that, plus there is another potential "spin-off" that Chris and I touched on briefly. Aside from a few *Voyager* episodes, though, there really isn't any *Star Trek* for me after *The Original Series*, and unless I'm allowed to go check out some of the other ships of the fleet, visiting that period brings up the old spectre of likenesses again! **IDW**

